

# State Data Use Spotlight: Florida

**Challenge:** How do we build the infrastructure to support local data literacy to improve graduation rates and academic outcomes for students with disabilities?

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) identified increasing the graduation rate of students with disabilities and decreasing the graduation gap between students with disabilities and all students as its state-identified measurable result (SIMR). To make progress toward the SIMR, the state sought to build the capacity of local education agencies (LEAs) to use data literacy strategies that could generalize to other initiatives, such as improving academic and behavior outcomes. This state spotlight highlights FDOE's strategies to build local data literacy capacity and the positive impacts those efforts had on student outcomes.

## State Context

In collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, FDOE set a goal to increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities by at least 2 percentage points per year, from 52 percent in 2012–13 to 62 percent in 2017–18. At the same time, FDOE set a goal to reduce the graduation gap between all students and students with disabilities by half. FDOE determined that, to make progress toward the SIMR, LEAs needed increased capacity to use local data to identify needs, select improvement strategies, and monitor impact. As part of the SIMR theory of action, FDOE identified key elements from the framework *Moving Your Numbers: What Matters Most and Key Practices* (NCEO, 2011; [www.movingyournumbers.org](http://www.movingyournumbers.org)) as essential to building LEA capacity for data literacy. *Moving Your Numbers* (MYN) is based on six practices: use data well, focus your goals, select and implement shared instructional practices, implement deeply, monitor and provide feedback and support, and inquire and learn. How could Florida enhance LEAs' overall data literacy to improve graduation rates while also making progress toward improved academic outcomes for students with disabilities?

### *Public School Facts: Florida*

Districts: 77  
Schools: 4,200  
Students: > 2.8 million  
Students with  
individualized education  
programs: 385,545

## Strategies for Success

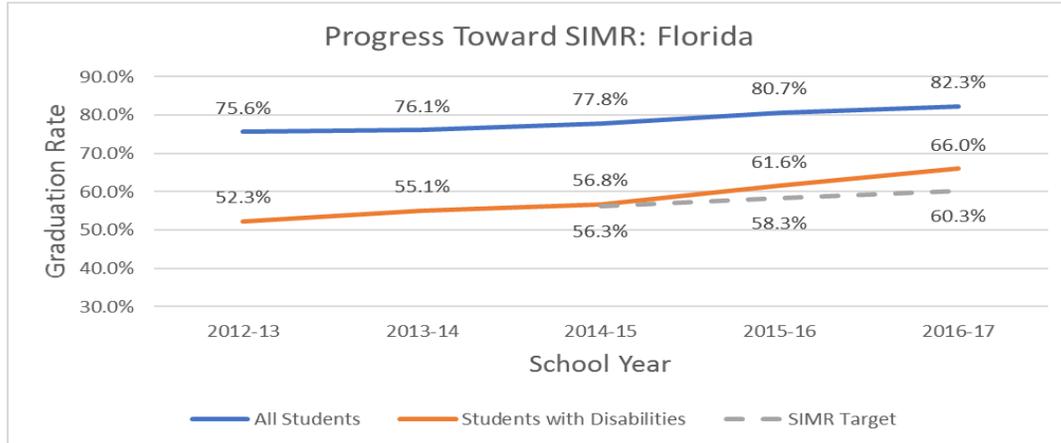
Florida used the following strategies to build the infrastructure to support data literacy across initiatives and improve outcomes for students with disabilities:

- *Provide a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to LEAs.* The state provides support in a tiered framework to LEAs, meaning that some LEAs receive more intensive and focused support. The level of support that LEAs receive is based upon their performance in State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report indicators and additional state-identified indicators.
- *Provide a continuum of professional learning opportunities.* To ensure sustainable and continuous improvement, FDOE aimed to increase the abilities of the state and LEAs to implement a framework of change based on data-based problem solving using the MYN framework. To achieve this goal, FDOE provided a continuum of supports, including technical assistance, training, resources, technology, and policies.
- *Make the right data accessible.* To support using data well, Florida provides all LEA-level performance data to all LEAs. FDOE shares data, sorted by like-sized districts, to LEAs as soon as the data are available. These data allow LEAs to compare their performance with other LEAs of like size in a timely fashion and encourages a sharing of practices between LEAs.
- *Encourage the use of an early warning system (EWS).* FDOE developed an EWS through [Project 10: Transition Education Network](#). This EWS uses school-level data, such as grade point average, credits earned, attendance, behavior, and other data elements, to identify students based on their risk of not graduating on time. FDOE, through Project 10, offers training and technical assistance in using the EWS at the LEA and school levels and has developed an online course that explains how to use the EWS (e.g., using the system to improve graduation rates).
- *Provide LEAs with a menu of evidence-based practices (EBPs).* FDOE provides LEAs with a list of evidence-based interventions that can assist students who are at risk of not graduating to meet graduation criteria. FDOE encourages LEAs to identify EBPs that are specific to their unique needs, based on local problem solving and action planning, using the six key practices as a framework. For example, [Check & Connect](#) is an evidence-based strategy promoting the use of mentoring for student engagement; however, an LEA may choose a different evidence-based strategy based on its unique needs and data.

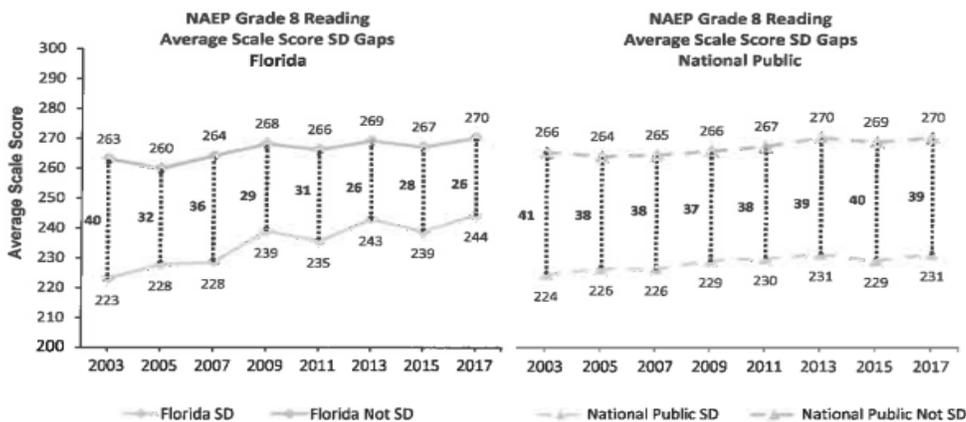
## Impact of Strategies

**Increased Graduation Rates.** The most noticeable impact of building LEAs' data literacy using the MYN framework is the consistent increase in graduation rates for all students, including students with disabilities (see graph below). Most important,

the gap between graduation rates of students with disabilities and all students decreased from 23 percentage points in 2012–13 to 16 percentage points in 2016–17. As a result, FDOE met its SIMR target in 2015, 2016, and 2017.



**Impact on Academic Outcomes.** Increased reading and mathematics outcomes are two areas that Florida considers critical to meeting the graduation goal for all students with disabilities. During the past several years, Florida students outperformed national averages on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in Grade 4 and Grade 8 reading and mathematics in almost all categories. In addition, Florida decreased the gap between the average scaled score (SS) of students with and without disabilities in fourth grade, from 32 points to 27 points. Similarly, the gap for eighth-grade students with and without disabilities during the past decade decreased from 36 points to 26 points, while the national average increased by 1 point. The graph below compares Florida’s Grade 8 NAEP reading scores with the national average.



\*The full NAEP data for Florida can be accessed here, <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/national-international-assessments/naep/results/2017reading.stml>.

In addition to achieving significant gains in reading, Florida students with disabilities outperformed the national average in mathematics for students with disabilities in Grade 4 (SS 230 compared to SS 213) and Grade 8 (SS 257 compared to SS 246). Florida has also shown significant decreases in gaps between students with and without disabilities in mathematics for Grade 4. During the past 10 years, Florida *decreased* the gap for fourth graders, from 22 to 19 points, while the national average *increased*, from 21 to 29 points. Similarly, the gap for Florida eighth graders on the mathematics test *decreased*, from 35 to 26 points, while the gap *increased*, from 38 to 41 points, for the national average.

## Recommendations for States

- Consider selecting coherent improvement strategies that can generalize to other outcomes and can be used by LEAs across a range of contexts (i.e., general and special education).
- Organize work around school-wide MTSS. Use a structured, problem-solving process to address systemic and specific issues impacting educational outcomes of students with disabilities.
- Provide tiered supports to LEAs throughout several years to ensure sustainability. This time allows districts to create, implement, and evaluate action plans with the support of the state.
- Support a variety of specific EBPs that address the various needs of LEAs and allow LEAs flexibility in the selection and use of specific practices.

### Available Resources

- National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), Technical Assistance State Facilitators (Find your state on the map [here](#))
- NCSI Data Use Team Technical Assistance Support (Contact: Kristin Ruedel at [kruedel@air.org](mailto:kruedel@air.org))
- National Center on Educational Outcomes, [Moving Your Numbers: What Matters Most and Key Practices](#)
- Project 10: [Transition Education Network](#)

*About this resource:* This resource was developed by members of the NCSI Data Use Service Area Team, including Kristin Ruedel (AIR), Gena Nelson (AIR), and Tessie Bailey (AIR), and in collaboration with Monica Verra-Tirado, Bureau Chief, and Judith White, Educational Program Director, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Florida Department of Education. The content was developed under cooperative agreement number #H326R140006 (NCSI) from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government. Project officer: Perry Williams.